

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

A complete listing of all pending claims is presented below.

1. (Canceled)

2. (Canceled)

3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently amended) The semiconductor device as claimed in Claim 1, characterized in that:

~~said semiconductor chip is provided with an external connection circuit formed therein, equipped with a second protection circuit which is electrically connected to said signal line so as to transmit signals on said signal line to an external instrument, and protecting said semiconductor element from being damaged by said connection, and~~

said first protection circuit is provided on the signal line connecting said internal circuits with each other, besides said second protection circuit. A semiconductor device configured as having a plurality of semiconductor chips each composed of a semiconductor element and having at least an internal circuit formed therein, characterized in that:

signal lines connecting said internal circuits respectively formed in said plurality of semiconductor chips are connected in an electrically direct manner,

a first protection circuit preventing said semiconductor elements from being damaged by the connection of said signal lines connecting said internal circuits with each other is provided, and

said semiconductor chip is provided with an external connection circuit formed therein, equipped with a second protection circuit which is electrically connected to said signal line so as to transmit signals on said signal line to an external instrument, and protecting said semiconductor element from being damaged by said connection.

5. (Currently amended) The semiconductor device as claimed in Claim 4, characterized in that:

~~said semiconductor chip is provided with an external connection circuit formed therein, equipped with a second protection circuit which is electrically connected to said signal line so as to transmit signals on said signal line to an external instrument, and protecting said semiconductor element from being damaged by said connection; and~~

a protection performance of said protection circuit against said damage differs from a protection performance of said second protection circuit owned by said external connection circuit.

6. (Currently amended) The semiconductor device as claimed in Claim 4, characterized by ~~having a switching circuit capable of switching of electrical connection and disconnection, to or from said signal line, of at least a portion of circuit components composing said first protection circuit in that a part of circuit components composing said first protection circuit has a switching circuit capable of switching of electrical connection and disconnection to or from said signal line.~~

7. (Currently amended) A method of fabricating a semiconductor device configured as having a plurality of semiconductor chips each composed of a semiconductor element and having at least an internal circuit formed therein, characterized by having:

~~a connecting step of connecting said individual internal circuits of said plurality of semiconductor chips in an electrically direct manner, each of said plurality of semiconductor chips comprising provided with a protection circuit for protecting a said semiconductor element in said internal circuit from a damage due to the electrical and direct connection between one said internal circuits; and the internal circuit on the other semiconductor chip respectively formed on said plurality of semiconductor chips, while activating said protection circuit.~~

8. (Currently amended) A method of fabricating a semiconductor device configured as having a plurality of semiconductor chips each composed of a semiconductor element and having at least an internal circuit formed therein, characterized by having:

an electrode forming step of forming protruded electrodes connecting the individual internal circuits of said plurality of semiconductor chips in an electrically direct manner, each of said plurality of semiconductor chips comprising a first protection circuit protecting a said semiconductor element ~~in said internal circuit~~ from a damage ~~due to the electrical and direct connection between said internal circuit and the internal circuit on the other semiconductor chip; caused by connecting electrically and directly between said internal circuits respectively formed on said plurality of semiconductor chips other semiconductor chip~~, while keeping said protection circuit active.

9. (Currently amended) The method of fabricating a semiconductor device as claimed in Claim 8, characterized by having a connecting step of connecting the individual internal circuits of said plurality of semiconductor chips in an electrically direct manner, using said protruded electrodes formed in said electrode formation step, while keeping said first protection circuit active.

10. (Original) The method of fabricating a semiconductor device as claimed in Claim 7 or 9, characterized by having, preceding said connection step, an inspecting step of inspecting functions of said internal circuits of said plurality of semiconductor chips, for every semiconductor chip.

11. (Original) The method of fabricating a semiconductor device as claimed in Claim 10, characterized in that:

    said semiconductor chip is provided with an external connection circuit formed therein, electrically connected to a signal line derived from said internal circuit so as to transmit signals on said signal line to an external instrument; and characterized by further having:

    between said inspection step and said connection step, an isolating step of electrically isolating at least a part of said external connection circuit provided corresponding to a target signal line directly connecting said internal circuits.

12. (Original) The method of fabricating a semiconductor device as claimed in Claim 10, characterized in that said inspecting step is carried out through said external connection circuit formed on said semiconductor chip.

13. (Canceled)